



Manuel Schneidmiller Post 154, Inc.

Rathdrum Idaho

Newsletter

Volume 3 Issue #4

April 2017

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National American Legion Convention

If you have ever considered attending a National Convention then this might be the one for you as it is the 99th being held in Reno, Nevada from August 18th – 24th.

If you would like to participate in the parade, there are shirts that everyone from Idaho will wear and may be purchased for \$34.50 for women and \$37.50 for men. You may either walk or ride in one of the vehicles provided. Parade lineup order is based on membership goals and it appears that Idaho will be near the front.

The Department Adjutant, Abe Abrahamson, recommends Saturday, Sunday, Monday and Tuesday for the opening ceremonies as the best days to attend if you don't want to sit through business meetings.

The Idaho delegation will be staying at the Peppermill Resort Spa and Casino <https://www.peppermillreno.com/> (there is a special rate so let them know when you call that you are with the American Legion) or if you have an RV you can check out this list <https://www.legion.org/sites/legion.org/files/legion/documents/Campground%20and%20RV%20Parking%202017.pdf>

There are free shuttles between the various hotels <https://www.legion.org/sites/legion.org/files/legion/documents/2017%20Shuttle%20Flyer.pdf>

If you have need of a wheelchair or scooter they can be rented https://www.legion.org/sites/legion.org/files/legion/documents/2017%20Scooters_0.pdf

More information will be made available in the coming months. – Bryan Bledsoe, Adjutant

Chaplain's Pew:

April brings many things into our lives and provides us with so many ways to be thankful. Just look around and see spring ready to burst forth after our long winter months! Find something beautiful in each and every day.

During this special time of Easter, however you choose to celebrate the day, be sure to remember and include all our American Legion family in your thoughts and prayers.

And, if you know of a veteran who needs an extra prayer, a card of cheer or a helping hand, please let someone know of the need. We belong to the American Legion because we are willing and able to help other veterans who need assistance in any way.

Waiting in the pews...Paula Atwood, Chaplain

Service Officer:

Parkinson's Disease and Agent Orange:

Veterans who develop Parkinson's disease and were exposed to Agent Orange or other herbicides during military service do not have to prove a connection between their disease and service to be eligible to receive VA health care and disability compensation.

Parkinson's disease is a degenerative brain disorder that leads to shaking, stiffness, and difficulty with walking, balance, and coordination.

Symptoms are: tremor, or trembling in hands, arms, legs, jaw, and face; rigidity or stiffness of the limbs and trunk; slowness of movement; and impaired balance and coordination.

Many effective treatment options are available. Hear [stories from Veterans living with Parkinson's](#).

Visit [MedlinePlus](#) to learn about treatment, the latest medical research, and more from the National Institutes of Health.

VA benefits for Parkinson's disease:

Veterans with Parkinson's disease who were [exposed to herbicides during service](#) may be eligible for [disability compensation](#) and [health care](#). Learn about [VA specialty care for Parkinson's disease](#).

Veterans who served in Vietnam, the Korean demilitarized zone or another area where Agent Orange was sprayed may be eligible for a free [Agent Orange registry health exam](#).

Surviving spouses, dependent children and dependent parents of Veterans who were exposed to herbicides during military service and died as the result of Parkinson's disease may be eligible for [survivors' benefits](#). – Ruth Aresvik, Service Officer

Memories:

My Cousin James "Chick" Robeson

Commander Sasse discusses family treasures:

I am from Chewelah Washington and my family had many members in the military during WWII. Two brave heroes to me come to mine. The first one was my uncle Warren Ross, S/Sgt. His hometown was Chewelah. He was a defender of the Philippines and was captured by the Japanese. He lived through the Batten Death March and spent the rest of the war as a POW. The second one I would like to talk about is my cousin which was also from Chewelah. His name was James A. "Chick" Robeson, Pfc., 2nd Battalion, 28th Regiment. He was a member of a small squad to scale Mt. Suribachi. They scaled the volcano to have the high ground. I have read that Chick Robeson was asked to be in the photograph, and he replied that he was not a Hollywood Marine. When I first read that I thought he meant he was not a showboat, but I learned later that Marines who went to boot camp in California were sometimes referred to as being Hollywood Marines. I always wondered why my family called him Chick, after his passing I learned it was because he was 16 when he joined the Marines. He was wounded in action on Iwo and returned to Chewelah. He was a member of the John V. Folsom Post 154 in Chewelah. I was lucky enough to meet him several times. I hope you enjoy this article from American Heritage Magazine, 1964, Volume 15, Issue 4.

Editor's Note: This story begins on page 5.

A Healthier You:

[Metformin \(Glucophage\) Side Effects & Complications – The People's Pharmacy](#)

The fascinating compound called metformin was discovered nearly a century ago. Scientists realized that it could lower blood sugar in an animal model (rabbits) as early as 1929, but it wasn't until the late 1950s that a French researcher came up with the name Glucophage (roughly translated as glucose eater). The FDA gave metformin (Glucophage) the green light for the treatment of type 2 diabetes in 1994, 36 years after it had been approved for this use in Britain.

Uses of Generic Metformin:

Glucophage lost its patent protection in the U.S. in 2002 and now most prescriptions are filled with generic metformin. This drug is recognized as a first line treatment to control blood sugar by improving the cells' response to insulin and reducing the amount of sugar that the liver makes. Unlike some other oral diabetes drugs, it doesn't lead to weight gain and may even help people get their weight under control.

[...] > [Read Article](#)

Bits & Pieces

- From Ruth Aresvik:

CHALLENGING ALL LEGION MEMBERS!! This is MY nautical wall (still in progress). What does YOUR military wall look like? Send in your photos!



- The VA Community Based Outpatient Clinic - better known as CBOC - in CDA is looking for volunteers to help out. They are badly needed. Contact the Spokane VA hospital to sign up and get trained.
- Department of Idaho has a new and improved website. Check it out here: <http://www.idaholegion.com>.
- Post 154 elections will be held during the general meeting on April 19th at 6PM at the Lions Club in Rathdrum. All offices are open for nomination. If you are interested in running for an office, contact the nominating committee at rathdrum154@gmail.com.

Mark Your Calendar:

The month of April is Children & Youth month.

April 2nd – American Legion Child Welfare Foundation Week

April 5th - US enters WWI (1917)

April 8th – Post Executive Committee Meeting – 6PM Lions Club Rathdrum

April 13th – Veterans Burial Benefits Seminar – see flyer page 13

April 15th – Easter Egg Hunt – 11AM Majestic Park in Rathdrum

April 19th – General Membership Meeting & Post Elections – 6PM Lions Club

April 21st – National Oratorical Finalists Contest – Indianapolis Indiana

The First Flag-raising On Iwo Jima

A single great photograph has become an indelible symbol of the Marines' heroic fight for the Japanese island. But hours earlier a now-almost-forgotten platoon had raised the first American flag on Mt. Suribachi's scarred summit—and under enemy fire

Richard Wheeler

Iwo Jima was a gray silhouette in the dawn of February 19, 1945, when we got our first look at it. The naval guns that would support our landing had started to thunder, and the target areas teemed with red perforations. From the deck of our transport we forty-six men of the 3rd Platoon of Company E, 2nd Battalion, 28th Marines, scanned the island apprehensively. We knew that its seven and a half square miles held more than 20,000 of Japan's best troops and a multitude of ingenious defenses. Its highest point was Mount Suribachi, an extinct volcano that made up its southwestern tip. This heavily fortified elevation would be our regiment's first objective.

Although we had no way of knowing it, our platoon was destined to play a vital role in Mount Suribachi's capture. Those men who managed to avoid death or injury would plant the first American Hag on the volcano's summit. Unfortunately, a few hours after the flag was raised it would be replaced by a larger one, and a dramatic photograph taken of this replacement would become so popular that it would doom our unit's exploit to obscurity.

It was about seven thirty when our platoon, along with the other assault troops of the 4th and 5th Marine Divisions, took to the sea in our landing craft and began to await the signal to head for shore. We were scheduled to land with the twelfth wave. The naval bombardment had been stepped up and was now raising thick columns of smoke and dust. At 8:05 several groups of carrier-based planes roared to the attack, and a little later a fleet of Seventh Air Force bombers from Saipan droned over the island and added to the destruction.

The first wave of troop-carrying amphibian tractors churned out of the water along the two-mile landing zone at 9:05, and succeeding waves began to beach at five-minute intervals. Under cover of the barrage, which had shifted inland, the units quickly organized and prepared for action.

Our platoon, in two tractors, was still some distance from the island when Mount Suribachi began to loom up forbiddingly on our left front. The craft I occupied soon took a burst of machine-gun fire that almost hit our coxswain. Then as we neared shore the booming of a large weapon could be heard over our engine's clatter, and some of us thought we were under pointblank, heavy-caliber fire. "It's one of our own! It's one of our own!" shouted our young platoon sergeant, Ernest Thomas. As our tracks touched bottom we passed an armored tractor whose 75-millimeter gun was striking toward the left, at Suribachi.

We hurried from our craft as soon as it clacked to a stop and a few moments later were lying on our stomachs about fifty feet from the water's edge. Artillery and mortar shells were whopping along the beach, and small-arms fire was weaving an invisible crisscross pattern just above it. We shortly lost two men. Pfc. John Fredotovich took serious mortar wounds in the torso and thigh, and Pfc. Bert Freedman was hit in the foot.

The sandy terrain that sloped up sharply a few yards ahead of us was crowded with 2nd Battalion Marines. Our regiment's 1st Battalion was already pushing across the island in an attempt to isolate

Mount Suribachi. Iwo was only 700 yards wide in our zone. About half the distance was barren sand, while the remainder held a sparse covering of subtropical brush and a maze of bunkers, pillboxes, and other emplacements. The medley of detonations issuing from the scrub wood indicated the fierceness of the 1st Battalion's struggle. Our company was to follow these men when it became practicable, and occupy the ground they had captured. The other two companies of the 2nd Battalion were to swing to the left and start attacking the Japanese holding the volcano. Our 3rd Battalion was kept in floating reserve, but would soon be ordered to the Suribachi front. The volcano had to be taken with all possible speed: it served the Japanese not only as a fortress but as an observation post that commanded a view of two thirds of the island.

Our platoon leader, First Lieutenant John Wells, shouted above the din, "Let's move out!" and began to lead us toward our company rendezvous area. Wells was an enthusiastic Marine who once told us in training: "Give me fifty men who aren't afraid to die, and I can take *any* position!" This heroic pronouncement had bothered us a little ever since.

We had to travel 200 yards along the crowded beach to the right and then another 200 yards inland, and we divided the hazardous trip into short jumps. Our way was marked with shocking sights: a dismembered leg trickling blood into the sand, a number of ashen faced casualties being treated by Navy hospital corpsmen, a blinded man being led toward the water for evacuation. An amphibian tractor with its landing party was hit by an artillery shell as we passed it, and a little farther on we saw a Marine blown high into the air by a shell that had burst directly under him.

The strain of being under fire was already beginning to show on the faces of most of our men. Some displayed a definite anxiety, their brows drawn into a deep frown. Others had a blank look, as though their facial muscles had gone numb.

We remained in our rendezvous area for about two hours. Although we were surrounded by noisy action we were in a zone of comparative quiet. The height of our position gave us a good view of the beach behind us. Enemy resistance to our landing was increasing: useless landing craft, jeeps, trucks, and other pieces of heavy equipment were settling haphazardly into the surf-soaked sand; around them lay a growing number of torn and bleeding bodies.

It was about one o'clock when our company commander, Captain Dave Severance, gave Lieutenant Wells the order to start taking us across the island. The 1st Battalion had reached the western beach, on the far side, but had suffered many casualties. Our unit was one of those that would be needed for the night defense of the ground already taken. We picked our way through the scrub wood slowly and cautiously, the trip taking several hours. Since the area had been only partly neutralized, we drew considerable fire. Fortunately a network of abandoned Japanese trenches and antitank ditches helped to screen our progress, but once we were pinned down by machine-gun fire from a pillbox and were unable to move until its diehard crew had been blasted by two Sherman tanks.

It was late afternoon when we reached the 1st Battalion's front, a zone that held numerous unassaulted Japanese defenses. Our lieutenant deployed us along a brushy rise that overlooked the beach. Then he took Pfc. Donald Ruhl, who was serving as his runner, and joined a 1st Battalion unit in attacking an artillery bunker. It was first hit with a shaped charge and a thermite grenade. Then Wells and Ruhl gunned down three Japanese who were trying to break from one of the

smoking entrances. Ruhl, his rifle emptied, finished off one of the fallen men with his bayonet. These were the first enemy soldiers our platoon accounted for.

As darkness settled over the island it seemed almost to have physical weight, for it was an added threat to our lives. The Navy began to send up illuminating shells, and this made the brush around us cast moving shadows that gave us a start when we mistook them for skulking Japanese. The large-scale counterattack we were expecting failed to develop, but in keeping with their reputation the enemy made many individual attempts to infiltrate our lines. One of these occurred in the /one occupied by my own squad. With a hand grenade in readiness, a Japanese came creeping toward us along a trench that Pfc. Edward Kurelik was covering with his Browning automatic rifle (BAR). Thinking it might be a Marine; Kurelik held his fire and called out a challenge. This was immediately followed by an exclamation in Japanese and a Hashing explosion in our midst. Kurelik and Pfc. Phillip Christman were hit, Kurelik seriously. The rest of us leapt tip with raised rifles as the Japanese darted away. We opened fire, and there were two orange explosions in the brush as Sergeant Howard Snyder, our squad leader, threw hand grenades. But the Japanese escaped.

The gray arc of dawn was by far the most beautiful sight most of us had ever seen. As the platoon began to stir I heard our right guide, Sergeant Henry "Hank" Hansen, say: "God, what a long night!" We had new orders to follow this second morning. We were to start working our way back across the island toward our own battalion's zone on the left of the lines facing Suribachi. By late afternoon we would be needed at the unit's front. The 1st Battalion would spend the day reorganizing and mopping up the scrub wood, while the 3rd Battalion would operate on the right of the attack on Suribachi.

As we moved out, swooping groups of Navy and Marine planes were beginning to smash at the volcano with bombs, rockets, and machine-gun bullets. From destroyers and gunboats lying close offshore came shells and more rockets. Our artillery batteries on the island added their own heavy missiles to the deafening, earthshaking barrage. We who had to face the enemy with light weapons were dramatically reminded that we had some powerful assistance.

It was about noon when we reached the eastern edge of the scrub wood and took cover along a line about 200 yards behind the units attacking Suribachi. Some of us began to nibble K rations at this point, though our stomachs were almost too tense to accept the nourishment. It was the first food we had eaten in thirty hours.

We got our orders to head for the Suribachi front about four o'clock. The assault had made some gains during the afternoon, and the line was now about 300 yards ahead of us. As we rose from our concealment and began to plod across the open sand we felt very conspicuous. But except for a few close shell bursts and the sporadic whine of small-arms fire, our advance did not encounter any notable resistance. Two tanks were sent to cover our final hundred yards. Although only a few men fell in behind them, the rest of us were encouraged just by having them with us. Suribachi was monstrosly close now, and some of us began to spot enemy movement in the brush covering its approaches. Now and then one of our riflemen would stop briefly and let go a few shots. When we finally halted we were part of a line that was a scant 200 yards from the volcano's first emplacements. Fortunately a generous scattering of bomb craters and shell holes enabled us to set up our night defense without delay.

During the first hour the Japanese gave us little trouble. Then they hit us with an intensive mortar barrage, the worst we had yet experienced. Up and down our lines the exploding shells walked, spewing steel and sand in all directions. The fire came from cleverly concealed positions, and we could do nothing about it but cower in our holes and pray that we'd be missed. We were infinitely relieved when it finally let up. Lieutenant Wells had thought the platoon was being torn apart, but our good fortune was still holding. Only one man had been hit, taking a blast of small fragments in the chest.

With the coming of darkness the Navy once more began to illuminate the island, and the volcano took on a ghostly aspect. The shells hurled against it burst vividly among its restless shadows, while enemy flares called artillery fire down on us from the north. One Japanese shell eventually hit an ammunition dump on the beach and set off a spectacular fireworks display. Suribachi and the reaches of sand about us were lit by a red glow that flickered eerily. It seemed as though our evil little island had suddenly been transported to hell.

The Japanese made one attempt to counterattack. They began to mass and organize on a plateau that lay along the volcano's left flank. But a destroyer covering this area closed in, switched on a searchlight, and thwarted the attack with a thunder-and-lightning concentration of shells and a-millimeter tracers.

Our second dawn on the island was not quite so welcome a sight as the first had been. As Suribachi's gray hulk began to outline itself against the sky we became starkly aware of what we were up against. We were now going to have to make a frontal assault, across a long-yard open stretch, into the volcano's main defenses. Again, the 2nd Battalion would attack on the left, and the 3rd Battalion on the right. The 1st Battalion, having finished its job of mopping up the scrub wood, had now been assigned a one-company front on the attack's extreme right flank.

The pre-attack bombardment was a repetition of the one the morning before, but we were closer to the volcano now and its effects seemed even more violent. We had to keep our heads down during the air strikes, for some of the rocket bursts sent clouds of debris winging toward our lines.

As the last group of planes droned away from the target, Sergeant Snyder, beside me in our shell hole, stood up and looked toward the rear. "Where's our tank support?" he asked with a frown. It turned out that the tanks had been delayed by refueling and rearming difficulties. Lieutenant Wells decided not to wait for them.

A few minutes later he launched our platoon's attack. Climbing out of his crater, he signaled with a sweep of his Thompson submachine gun for us to follow him, and began to trot toward Suribachi. By this time we had learned that Wells' courage was not just talk. As we forced ourselves to rise from our holes and imitate his example, I could feel the fear dragging at my jowls. We seemed to be heading for certain death.

For the first few moments the volcano was unresponsive. Then it erupted. Rifle and machine-gun bullets snapped and whirred about us, and crashing shells began to kick up savage funnels of steel and sand. The Japanese were making a desperate attempt to stop us. Men started to fall, and the entreating cry, "Corpsman! Corpsman!" became a part of the action's jumble of sounds. Pfc. Raymond Strahm went down a few yards to my left, a piece of shrapnel above his ear. His helmet slowed the fragment and saved his life. Then another man near me fell with a leg wound. And next it was my turn. Corporal Edward Romero and I caught it from the same shell; Romero was hit in

the back, and I had my jaw broken and two molars smashed. Corpsman Clifford Langley reached us, but as the attack swept on, a second shell hit all three of us. Romero was killed, Langley took several small fragments of shrapnel in the torso, and a large piece laid my left calf bare and cut its main muscle in two. Langley bandaged my leg and then followed the platoon. I crawled into a shell hole to await evacuation—which came within half an hour. What happened to my platoon after that I was to hear later, in many conversations with the survivors.

Although shells and bullets continued to menace them, our unit's darting groups soon neared Suribachi's first fringe of brush. They had begun to find a degree of hope in the destruction our planes and guns had wreaked along the volcano's belt of defenses, but as they rushed the first line they found it harboring plenty of live defenders. Hank Hansen and Donald Ruhl, who had been up ahead with Wells, ran to the summit of a large, flat-topped pillbox and promptly clashed with a unit of Japanese located in a network of trenches just behind it. While the two Marines were firing point-blank into the trenches, a demolition charge came flying through the air and landed in front of them. Yelling a warning to Hansen, Ruhl dived on the charge and absorbed its full blast. Hansen had recoiled off the pillbox as the charge exploded, and now, with the emplacement between him and the enemy, he reached up and grasped Ruhl by the foot. A well, which was crouching nearby and could see that Ruhl's whole chest had been blown away, quickly ordered, "Leave him alone. He's dead." Ruhl had sacrificed himself to save a comrade, and was posthumously awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor.

Howard Snyder and the first squad were moving up on the left flank of the pillbox now, and they took up the fight. The Japanese had begun to scurry back and forth through the trenches and appeared to be trying to organize for a counterattack. Snyder and Corporal Harold Keller quickly began to lob grenades among them, and Pfc. James Robeson and Pfc. Louie Adrian, our squad's full-blooded Spokane Indian, took turns firing with their BAR's. After Snyder and Keller had thrown all the grenades the squad was carrying, Lieutenant Wells tossed them his own and ordered more passed up to them. The combination of grenades and BAR fire took its toll of the scampering enemy, and no counterattack developed. But now the Indian, while standing upright and firing into the trenches, got a bullet through the heart. His BAR kept chugging as he crumpled to the sand. Our platoon's second and third squads, led by Corporal Robert Lane and Sergeant Kenneth Midkiff, were by this time close behind the leading attackers, and one of Midkiff's BAR men, big Leo Rozek, hurried forward and took up the firing.

Now a Marine carrying a light machine gun moved into the platoon's area, and Wells placed him on the line. The man began to fire into the entrenched Japanese with deadly effect, but he was soon killed. Several other men tried to operate the machine gun, but all were shot away from it. During these moments a Japanese bunker that lay just ahead of the platoon began to spew hand grenades. Many of our men were pinned down by these blasts, and there wasn't much they could do about them. Rifle fire proved ineffective, and the platoon had used up its own grenades. Corporal Charles Lindberg's squad, with its flame throwers and demolitions, had not yet made its final break through the heavy mortar barrage that was still being laid on the open sand. Corporal Wayne Hathaway, a quiet spoken veteran of several Pacific campaigns, volunteered to go back for more grenades, and Wells consented. Hathaway took with him Private Edward Krisik, an eighteen-year-old who was seeing his first action. The pair had not gone far before they were cut down by Japanese bullets. Both were wounded fatally.

Several men of the assault squad had moved up with demolitions now, and Hank Hansen told Wells that he thought he could get to the bunker with a charge. "Give it a try!" Wells ordered. With some help, Hansen rigged a heavy charge and equipped it with a time fuse. Then he ran at the bunker. But instead of placing the charge at an aperture, he threw it—and missed. The blast that followed rocked the area but served only to make the enemy grenadiers more active. To further complicate the platoon's problems, enemy mortar shells were starting to burst alarmingly close.

Chuck Lindberg had brought up the rest of the assault squad by this time, and Wells prepared to direct our flame-thrower men against the bunker and the other menacing defenses. But the effort was impeded by mortar fire, which now had our range. One of the shells soon scored a bull's-eye. It burst among Wells and four other Marines. Wells was hardest hit. His legs were filled with shrapnel, his trousers were shredded, and one of the canteens at his belt was exploded. As he said later, at first he had no feeling in his legs, being conscious only of a burning sensation along his spine. But he did not relinquish command of the platoon. By the time a medical corpsman had given him first aid, the feeling had crept back into his legs. Discovering that he was still capable of movement, he disregarded his wounds and turned his attention once more to the platoon's difficulties. The situation had become critical. Our unit had lost seventeen men since the attack began; those who were still in action were being tried to the limit of their endurance and had only a precarious hold on the section of enemy line they had hit.

But then things began to look up. Braving the mortar shells, hand grenades, and small-arms fire, our two flame-thrower men, Lindberg and Private Robert Goode, started to move against the troublesome defenses. The results they achieved were dramatic—and terrible. Squirting streams of fire at every opening they could find, they began to destroy dozens of the enemy. The bunker and the pillboxes were turned into furnaces. Ammunition exploded, and shell casings, bullet casings, grenade fragments, and other pieces of debris came flying out through the smoking apertures. As the Japanese died, the platoon could smell their roasting flesh. Some of our men said later that the circumstances made the odor seem the sweetest they had ever smelled.

Tanks were moving up all along the line now, and the assault on the first defenses was assured of success. By this time our tattered and bloody lieutenant had got his wounds full of sand and was groggy from two morphine injections. He knew he was no longer fit to command. Turning our unit over to Platoon Sergeant Thomas, he crawled painfully to the rear. For his leadership that morning, Wells was awarded the Navy Cross. Thomas, who was only twenty years old, had the same sort of spirit, and he too won the Navy Cross for his work against Suribachi. It was he who discovered the soft spot that enabled our battalion to make a relentless drive toward the volcano's base.

The push through the fortifications meant a hodgepodge of encounters accompanied by a great racket and many moments of confusion. Hand-to-hand fighting developed as enemy soldiers suddenly darted from cover, some to attack and others to race for the safety of more remote defenses. There were a number of knife killings and bayonetting's. One Marine, attacked by a saber-swinging Japanese officer, caught the sword with his bare hands, wrested it from the officer, and hacked him to death with it. I saw this Marine later. He stopped by my hospital-ship bunk and told me his story. Both his hands were badly gashed—but he still had the Japanese sword.

Three days after our landing on Iwo Jima, Suribachi was surrounded and the fight for the volcano was largely won. There were still substantial numbers of Japanese in obscure caves and other holes, but hundreds had been slain and the power of the fortress had been broken. Our platoon, its thin

ranks bolstered by replacements, was chosen to secure the summit. By this time our unit had more than proved its combat efficiency. Our high-spirited lieutenant had come pretty close to having the fifty men he wanted—the fifty who weren't afraid to die.

The next morning our company's executive officer, First Lieutenant Harold G. Schrier, led our platoon to 2nd Battalion headquarters, which had been set up near the volcano's northeast base. While Schrier consulted with our battalion commander, Colonel Chandler W. Johnson, our men were issued extra ammunition and were joined by a radioman, two teams of stretcher-bearers, and a photographer, Staff Sergeant Louis Lowery of *Leatherneck* Magazine.

As the patrol prepared to move out, the Colonel handed Lieutenant Schrier a folded American flag, one that our battalion adjutant had been carrying in his map case. He had acquired the flag from the *Missoula*, the transport that had carried our battalion to Saipan, our staging area. Colonel Johnson's orders were simple: the patrol was to climb to the summit, secure the crater, and if possible, raise the flag. Our men hoped fervently that their mission would prove as uncomplicated as the Colonel made it sound.

Falling into an irregular column, the patrol headed directly for the volcano's base. When the route became steep and difficult, Schrier sent out flankers to guard the vulnerable column against surprise attack. Some slopes of the volcano were so steep they had to be negotiated on hands and knees. Although several cave entrances were sighted, no resistance developed. Far below, the Marines posted in a semicircle around the northeast base observed the patrol's laborious ascent. Also watching, through binoculars, were numerous men of the U.S. fleet.

Within half an hour after leaving battalion headquarters the patrol reached the summit. The scattered caves and the yawning crater remained silent, so Schrier ordered the men to start moving over the rim. Howard Snyder took the lead, Harold Keller was second, and Chick Robeson was third. Then came Schrier, his radioman, and Leo Rozek. Robert Leader was seventh—and fully expecting to be fired upon, he hoped that number 7 was really the lucky number it was supposed to be. The men fanned out and took up positions just inside the rim. They were tensed for action, but the caves about them and the reaches below them were strangely still. Finally one of the Marines stood up and urinated down the crater's slope. But even this insulting gesture did not stir the Japanese to action.

While half the patrol stayed at the rim, the other half now began to press into the crater to probe for resistance and to look for something that might serve as a flagpole. Keller, moving in the lead, made the first contact with the enemy. He spotted a man climbing out of a vertical hole, his back to the Marines. Keller fired three times from the hip, and the Japanese dropped out of sight. Now enemy hand grenades began to explode among our men. Those closest to the caves from which they came took cover, and replied with grenades of their own.

While these duels were being fought, Leader and Rozek discovered a long piece of pipe, apparently a remnant of a rain-catching system, and passed it up to the summit. Waiting with the flag were Schrier, Thomas, Hansen, and Lindberg, and they promptly set about affixing it to the pole. It was about 10:30 *A.M.* when the pole was planted and the Stars and Stripes, seized by the wind, began to whip proudly over Mount Suribachi. The date was February 23, 1945. This achievement by the 3rd Platoon had a unique significance. Mount Suribachi was the first piece of Japanese-owned

territory—not counting mandates like Saipan—to be captured by American forces during World War II.

The planting of the colors brought a great swell of pride and exultation among Iwo Jima's combat-weary Marines. Those who were watching from below raised the cry, "There goes the flag!" The electrifying word quickly spread to all the units about the volcano's base and to the regiments that were fighting the main battle to the north. The cry was also taken up by the fleet. Aboard my hospital ship I thrilled to the news as it came over the public-address system—though I was not aware at the time that it was my own platoon that had raised the flag. Soon, word of the accomplishment would also be cheering the people at home, who had been following the progress of the battle anxiously and had been disheartened by the reports of our mounting casualties.

The flag was barely up before it was challenged. A Japanese rifleman stepped out of a cave and fired at photographer Louis Lowery and BAR-man Robeson. He missed, but Robeson didn't. He swung his BAR up for a long burst, and the man dropped heavily. The body was quickly seized by the feet and dragged back into the cave. But now an officer stepped out. Grimacing bitterly, he charged toward the flag-raising group, brandishing a sword that had only half a blade. By this time a dozen Marines were alerted to the cave threat, and a volley of bullets turned the one-man charge into a headlong tumble.

Several additional caves now came to life, and enemy grenades once more started to fly. Lowery had another narrow escape. A grenade landed near him and he was forced to leap down the side of the volcano, tumbling fifty feet before he was able to catch hold of a bush, and breaking his camera.


Our men once more met the grenade threat with grenades of their own. They flanked the caves and kept tossing them inside until the occupants were silenced. Some of the caves were then also assaulted with flame throwers and blown shut with demolitions. The cave that had produced the rifleman and the swordsman was one of these. It would later be dug open by souvenir hunters who would discover that it held no less than 150 decomposing enemy bodies. Many of these men died by detonating grenades held to their chests. They had chosen suicide over suffocation.

Other units soon joined the 3rd Platoon at the summit and began to assist with the crater mop-up. Similar operations were still going on at the volcano's base and had also been started on its outer slopes.

It was about three hours after the flag was planted that Colonel Johnson made the decision to replace it. The 3rd Platoon's flag measured only 54 inches by 28 inches, and was hard to see from a distance without binoculars. Since the sight of the flag was important to the morale of our troops, who still had a lot of fighting to do before Iwo was secured, Johnson felt that a larger one was needed. He got a bigger flag from LST 779, a vessel beached near Suribachi's eastern base. As the new flag was being carried up the volcano, Joe Rosenthal, a civilian photographer covering the Iwo operation for the Associated Press, spotted the move and decided to follow. This resulted in the now-famous photograph. Although about half the 3rd Platoon was present at the second raising, only one of our men, Corpsman John Bradley, is in Rosenthal's picture. So much has been written about the second event that it need not be discussed here. But let me say this: the photograph deserves to be popular; it depicts an authentic combat scene, even though the circumstances were less impromptu and dangerous than those of the earlier flag-raising.

By the time Suribachi was finally secured, the 28th Marines had lost more than 900 men. But the grimmest part of the tale is that our regiment's ordeal was only beginning. On February 28 it was ordered to Iwo Jima's northern front. There, during several weeks of the bitterest kind of fighting, it was cut to pieces. As for the 3rd Platoon, it was virtually wiped out. Only four of our original forty-six men got through the battle unscathed. Among the dead were two of our flag raisers, courageous Ernest Thomas and Hank Hansen.

I don't suppose this telling of the 3rd Platoon's story will make much difference to history. But maybe it will help to keep my former comrades from being forgotten entirely. I hope so. After all, they were Iwo Jima's *real* flag-raising heroes.



Veteran Burial Benefits

Hosted by:

North Idaho College Veterans Club and the Spokane Veterans Center

Join us for this **FREE** informational seminar on types of burial benefits are available for veterans. Our guest speaker will be Mr. Rudy Lopez, director of the Washington State Veterans Cemetery at Medical Lake, and he will address the eligibility criteria for burial benefits. Knowing this vital information can bring real peace and comfort to you and your loved ones.

Place:

North Idaho College Student Union Building—Driftwood Bay
1000 W. Garden Ave., Coeur d'Alene, Idaho

Date and time:

April 13th, 2017 @6pm

For more information, please contact:
Carl George @ cgeorge@nic.edu | (208) 666-8027

